

## CHAPTER 5 – EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

### Running off the Pavement

If the vehicle's wheels drift onto the shoulder of the road, the driver should not try to turn back onto the pavement right away, which might throw a car off balance. Instead, the driver should stay on the shoulder and ease up on the gas pedal. After slowing down, turn back onto the road gradually. ALWAYS slow down on curves.

### Weather and Driving

According to the National Weather Service, motorists need to be aware that storms may cause road hazards. When weather is threatening (wind or sky), a motorist should monitor the radio for warning information and be prepared to take particular safety actions.

- **Tornadoes:** Exit the vehicle immediately and go to a low lying area toward the storm, taking precautions to avoid rushing water; cover your head.
- **High Winds:** Strong winds have high impact on high profile vehicles.

### Plunging into Water

If a car plunges into water, but does not sink immediately, a driver or occupant can escape through a window. It is hard to open a door against water pressure. If the car sinks beneath the surface before escaping, the weight of the engine will force the front end down first. Some air may be trapped near the roof. Of help are the following tips:

- Wear a seat belt during the crash, increasing the chance of surviving the initial impact of the water.
- Get into the air pocket so you can breathe.
- When the car settles and pressure inside the car is equal to the outside pressure, it is easier to open a door or window.
- Remember that you may have several seconds of time. Without panic, there can be enough time to escape.

### Flash Flooding

Flash floods cause more deaths than any other weather event each year. If caught in a storm or come upon a hazardous situation, a motorist should keep these things in mind:

- Be especially alert at night or when driving on unfamiliar roads.
- Do not drive around traffic barricades or past road closed signs.
- Be aware that bridges, culverts and roadbeds may be washed away or undermined by floodwaters.
- Do not drive where water is over the road. The depth of water is not always obvious, and the water may hide washouts.
- As little as six inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- If your car stalls in a flooded area, abandon it as soon as possible. Floodwaters can rise rapidly and sweep a car and its occupants away.

## CAR FAILURE

### Tire Blowout

In a situation with a flat tire or blowout, the driver should hold the steering wheel firmly and keep the car going straight. Slow down gradually. Take foot off the gas pedal, but do not apply the brakes. Let the car slow down, then pull off the road and apply the brakes when the car is almost stopped.

### Brake Failure

If a vehicle's conventional disc or drum brakes suddenly fail, the driver should shift to a low gear, if possible, and pump the brake pedal fast and hard several times. This may build up enough brake pressure to stop the car. If that doesn't work, use the parking brake, but hold the brake release so it can be let up if the rear wheels lock and cause skidding. With the car in a low gear, begin looking for a place to stop. Make sure the car is off the roadway. After the car has stopped, call for help. Don't try to drive the car to a garage.

### Ignition Locking

Drivers in an emergency situation on the highway should not attempt to turn off the vehicle while it is still in motion in order to bring the vehicle to a stop. The basic rule when operating a vehicle with a steering wheel interlock system is: NEVER turn the ignition to the lock position while the vehicle is in motion. The steering will lock as the steering wheel is turned, causing a loss of control of the vehicle.

## MAJOR CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS

At least 70% of all automobile accidents are a result of human error, which can be avoided by using defensive driving techniques. Accidents are caused both by driver inattention and failure to observe the rules of the road. A driver should always remember: getting behind the wheel of an automobile means taking responsibility to safely operate a potentially dangerous piece of machinery.

The likelihood of an accident increases if the driver is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs should be avoided at all times. This includes prescription medication or over-the-counter medication that can cause drowsiness and other side effects. A driver should consult the label on any medication or discuss its side effects with a doctor before driving.

### Ways to Spot an Impaired Driver

A car can be a lethal weapon when operated by a driver impaired by drugs or alcohol. A driver may be impaired if the vehicle:

- Makes wide turns.
- Straddles the centerline or weaves back and forth.
- Exceeds the speed limit or drives unusually slow.
- Comes close to hitting another vehicle or object.

- Drives off the road or into an oncoming lane of traffic.
- Swerves, drifts or follows too closely.
- Stops for no reason or turns abruptly or illegally.
- Signals inconsistently or drives at night without headlights.

**SAFETY TIP:** Remember that an impaired driver is very dangerous, and you should keep your distance. If you spot an impaired driver, call 911.

## Avoiding Collisions

Despite safe driving, emergencies do arise. If it appears that a car will hit something, there are three things a driver can do:

- Stop quickly.
- Turn quickly. If you feel you can not stop in time, turn away.
- Speeding up may be the best or only necessary way to avoid a collision.

## Last Second Choices

In the few seconds before a possible collision, a driver should try not to panic. If a collision looks possible, he/she should turn away from oncoming traffic, even if it means leaving the road. Drive (rather than skid) off the road. This allows more control. Choose to hit something that will give way (such as brush or shrubs) rather than something hard. Choose to hit something going your way rather than something that is not moving. Choose to hit something not moving rather than something moving toward you. Try to make it a glancing blow. A sideswipe will help you slow down. Avoid hitting anything head on.

## TEENS BEHIND THE WHEEL

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, teens die in cars at a higher rate than any other age group, including seniors. The problem is worse among 16 year olds due to their limited driving experience and risk-taking driving behavior.

### Risk Factors for Teens

- **Inattentiveness:** Driver inattention/distraction is the most common contributing factor in multiple-vehicle crashes.
- **Excessive Speed:** Illegal/unsafe speed is the most common contributing factor in single vehicle crashes. Teens particularly have difficulty adjusting speed to suit current driving conditions.
- **Failure to Wear a Safety Belt:** Properly wearing a safety belt reduces the risk of fatal injury to occupants.
- **Not Checking Traffic Before Pulling Out:** Most crashes involving teens occur at intersections because of their inexperience judging distance and speed.
- **Driving with Other teens:** The presence of passengers strongly increases crash risk. For teen drivers, the more passengers, the greater the risk.

## Tips for Parents of Teens

- When you drive, set a good example for your teen.
- Require safety belt use at all times.
- Take your teen practice driving with you while your teen has a learner's permit and during the first year of licensed driving.
- Expose your teen to different driving conditions, including wet roads, snow, highways, rural roads, night driving, etc.
- Practice on unfamiliar roads.
- Choose vehicles for safety, not image.
- Take the necessary time to discuss driving rules, responsibilities and consequences appropriate for your family.
- Develop a strategy for progressive privileges. As the teen driver gains experience and demonstrates appropriate decisions, allow your teen to "graduate" to a higher level of driving responsibility.
- Studies show that new drivers who are supervised have very few crashes. Developing necessary skills for safe driving is a complex task and can be learned only after many hours of practice. Driver education is a first step, but parents have a crucial role in teaching teens to drive.

## Tips for Teen Drivers

- You and your passengers should always wear seat belts.
- Always adjust your seats and mirrors for the best visibility while driving.
- Don't adjust the radio or CD player while you are driving. It is better to wait until you can pull over, because taking your focus off the road for even a few seconds could lead to a collision.
- Don't blast the radio. You might miss hearing a siren or a horn that could warn you of possible trouble.
- Don't talk on the phone, put on makeup, comb your hair or eat while driving.
- Don't take drugs or ride with anyone who has been using drugs. Even some over-the-counter drugs can make you drowsy.
- Don't drink alcohol and drive or ride with anyone who has been drinking alcohol.
- When the light turns green, make sure the intersection is clear before you proceed
- Don't run red lights.
- Obey the speed limit. Going too fast gives you less time to stop or react.

## WHAT TO DO IN AN ACCIDENT

Drivers and passengers can be injured anytime, anyplace. That's why such occurrences are called accidents – an unexpected, unfortunate situation in which one is rarely prepared. No one expects to be in an accident, but even the most careful drivers may be involved in an auto accident. Knowing what to do after an auto accident can make the experience a less frightening one and decrease the chance of unnecessary complications.

### Follow These Rules:

- **Stop.** If you are involved in an accident, you must stop and provide information to others involved in the accident. It is a serious crime to leave the scene of an accident and can result in the suspension of your driver's license.
- **Stay Calm.** If you are upset, this will only complicate matters.
- **Check for Injuries.** Your life and health are more important than vehicle damage. If there are any injuries, do not move the injured person(s) unless it is absolutely necessary; keep the person(s) lying down, quiet and warm.
- **Call the Police Department.** If there is any significant damage to any vehicle or property, contact the police. If there are any injuries to any person(s), make sure that the police are told when notified.
- **Alert Other Drivers** that an accident has occurred. Turn on your emergency signals or use another means to let people know that there has been an accident.
- **Exchange Information.** If there are no injuries, exchange information such as name, address, license plate, driver's license number and insurance information. Jot down names, addresses and phone numbers of all those who witnessed the accident. Include details regarding the accident, the location, weather conditions, and visibility. Obtain the names and badge numbers of all police officers at the scene. Ask the investigating officer how to obtain a copy of the police report.
- **Do Not Sign Any Document** unless it is for the police or your insurance agent.
- **Notify your insurance agent** immediately. Be sure to ask them to file an operator's crash report (SR21 form). By Indiana state law, it is your responsibility to make sure this report is filed within ten days after the accident.
- **Carry a Disposable Camera** in your glove compartment.

These instructions are general guidelines only. Each accident scenario may be different, and there are various responsibilities for different types of accidents.

**SAFETY TIP: Avoid staged accidents.** Each year, Americans pay more than \$30 billion in higher insurance premiums as a result of insurance fraud. This costs each American household about \$200 more annually in insurance premiums. One of the leading types of organized insurance fraud is staged accidents. If you suspect a scam, call the NICB hotline at 1-800-TEL-NICB.

## Single Vehicle Accidents

In a single-vehicle accident that causes damage to another vehicle or property and the owner is not around, a driver must leave his/her name, address and telephone number on a note where the owner will see it. If the damaged property is in a location where a note would not be easily found, the driver must notify the sheriff or a member of the Indiana State Police with the above information.

## Complete a Written Report of the Accident

A written report of the accident must be sent to the Indiana BMV within ten days of an accident that results in death, injury, or more than \$1,000 damage to property. This report is confidential, and it cannot be used as evidence in a trial. A person who fails to report an accident may have his or her license suspended and may be subject to a fine. A crash report (form SR21) can be obtained from any police officer.

## Furnish Proof of Financial Responsibility

After an accident, a driver must furnish proof to the BMV, when required, that automobile liability insurance, or other proof of financial responsibility, was in effect on the date of the accident.

## Avoiding Vehicle Theft

A car is stolen about every 19 seconds in North America. By taking a few precautions below, the chances of having a vehicle stolen can be reduced:

- Remove the keys.
- Always lock the car doors.
- Don't hide a second set of keys in the car.
- Park with front wheels turned sharply to the right; apply the emergency brake.
- Never leave car unattended with the engine running.
- Consider installing an anti-theft device.
- Park in a well-lit, well-patrolled area whenever possible.

## Road Rage

Aggressive driving – tailgating, honking, fist and hand gestures, yelling, speeding, cutting off other drivers and more recently, the use of firearms – has become a real danger on American highways. Drivers taking out their stress and anger on other drivers have been called “the fastest-growing menace on the highway today.”



Because road rage is increasing every year, motorists must learn to protect themselves against aggressive drivers. If a driver has a tendency to get irritated and angry behind the wheel, he/she must learn to change that behavior. Law enforcement and insurance companies are getting tougher on aggressive drivers because they cause too many collisions.

## **Routine Traffic Stops by Law Enforcement**

A routine traffic stop can be stressful. However, to law enforcement, it is considered dangerous. Law enforcement officers do not know if an individual will be a routine stop for a violation or a criminal with intent to harm the officer. Therefore, here are some simple rules to follow if a driver is signaled to pull over by law enforcement.

- Signal your intentions and pull safely to the shoulder of the road.
- Remain in the vehicle, and roll down the window.
- Wait for the officer to approach.
- Turn on the dome light if the stop is at night.
- Keep your hands on the wheel and instruct passengers to keep hands in view.
- Do not dig in the glove compartment or under the seat.
- Keep the registration, insurance and driver's license easily accessible.

## **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

Carbon monoxide gas from a vehicle engine can kill you. A motorist cannot see it, smell it, or taste it. Carbon monoxide is most likely to leak into a car when its heater is running, when the exhaust system is not working properly, or when in heavy traffic where exhaust fumes are breathed from other vehicles. A faulty exhaust system can leak poisonous fumes into the back seat area where children may be.

### **Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

- Drowsiness and/or dizziness.
- The skin has a blue color; lips turn blue.
- Lights seem brighter.
- Tightened forehead.

### **How to Avoid Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

- Have exhaust system checked regularly by a reputable mechanic.
- Be alert for any unusual roar from under the car.
- NEVER let the engine run in a closed garage.
- In congested traffic, close the fresh-air vent.
- On highways in cold weather, open the fresh-air vent.
- If vehicle has been outside during a snowstorm, check exhaust pipes for packed snow.